

Development of the Arts in Murray City

Murray City's art traditions are about as old as the city itself. Murray's Commercial Hall built in 1893 featured a stage on the second floor which became known as Murray's Opera House where theatrical presentations were held for several decades. Willam F. Robinson, Murray's own "music man", started teaching music in 1907 by walking to each elementary school. The music program expanded to include secondary music programs with marching bands, choirs, and operettas. Other programs in visual arts, theater, and dance grew as school curriculum expanded during the 1920s. Sixth grade students anxiously prepared for the popular Maypole dance competition, part of an annual community festival sponsored by the school district during the 30s through the 50s. Arts in the broader community were developed by local musicians such as the Murray Band conducted by William V. Morris and the Olympus Male Choir conducted by Morris Cannegieter. Art related businesses thrived such as the Matt Madsen art studio and Don Blair Photography. Day Murray Music which opened in 1946 continues to serve the Murray community.

Beginning in the 1970s, Murray experienced a major expansion in the arts. In 1974, the **Murray Community Education dance** program was born and currently includes over 500 students; other art organizations followed, all of which still exist today. Founded in 1975, the **Murray Symphony Orchestra** was originally named the Holladay Pops Symphony Orchestra and Chorale. The following year, the name was changed to Murray Symphony Orchestra when the organization was actively recruited by Arlette Day and began to rehearse at Murray High. It has grown to membership of over 70 instrumentalists. The orchestra presents five to six concerts each year.

Murray Arts Council was formed in 1977 after the city presented two productions in the park, the first celebrating our nation's bicentennial. In 1980, the first annual musical, *South Pacific*, was produced on a temporary stage built in Murray Park. In 1985, the arts council opened the new Murray Park Amphitheater with *Cinderella* and continues to produce at least one musical each year. They created the 1st Murray Idol Competition in 2008.

Two groups began in 1986. The **Murray Concert Band** provides an opportunity for musicians of all ages and various walks of life to "make music together". The band rehearses weekly and provides four major concerts a year. The **Murray City Arts Advisory Board** was created to oversee and provide future vision for the arts in the community, working with the various art groups currently functioning.

The **Ballet Centre** opened its doors in 1986 to offer classical ballet to children and adults from ages three to adult. They produce three community productions each year, and offer free community workshops and daytime showings for local schools. As part of the Ballet Centre business, the **Art Centre** hosts ballroom dancing four days a week. Another major theatrical business, **Desert Star Playhouse** opened in 1989.

In 1992, the **Murray City Cultural Arts** program was created under the Parks and Recreation Department. Together, the Arts Advisory Board and the Cultural Programs Office have created year-round cultural activities including arts-in-education projects, workshops and camps, musicals, visual art exhibits and competitions involving over 5000 youth and adults annually. A summer and winter season, created together with local performing arts organizations, have been successfully operating since 1990. Murray Arts in the Park entertains over 13,000 patrons each summer.